Time to Get Back on Track

The Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) may seem to be a mouthful of jargon to many (men) but it is in effect the most powerful instrument to pressurise governments that are signatories to it, to comply with its mandates that essentially call for equality of women and men in all spheres of public and private life. Bangladesh, an enthusiastic signatory since 1984, thanks to the tireless efforts of the women's movement here, has continued to fall behind because of reservations to some crucial articles. While CEDAW and Bangladesh's constitution offer a progressive, equitable solution to the problem of gender discrimination, the absence of state commitment and the clandestine changing of the National Policy for Women's Advancement has taken the fight against discrimination back to the end of the ladder. The refusal to adopt a uniform family code has become the most controversial issue for groups that insist on maintaining the status quo.

AASHA MEHREEN AMIN
PHOTOS: ZAHEDUL I KHAN



The changed National Policy for Women's Advancement is a major blow to the women's movement.